



Geoduck Aquaculture Pilot Project

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Geoduck Trivia:

Geoduck lose their ability to dig as they grow.

Newly planted geoduck are feasted on by crabs, starfish, and moonsnails, so growers use netting over the top of the tube to protect the geoduck seed.

No geoduck seeding or culture is done in eelgrass beds or herring or smelt spawning grounds.

Intertidal geoduck are harvested by water jets at low tide.

Legislature Funds Geoduck Pilot Project

The 2003 Legislature directed the state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to develop a Pilot Project proposal to determine the feasibility of geoduck aquaculture on tidelands and submerged lands DNR manages in Puget Sound as a public trust. DNR is working with the University of Washington School of Aquatic & Fishery Sciences to design and conduct this Pilot Project. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, 18 Puget Sound Treaty Indian Tribes, and DNR jointly manage this Pilot Project.

This is the fourth edition of an e-newsletter designed to keep everyone informed about the progress of the Pilot Project.

Scientific Studies

We have three different contracts (with the Pacific Shellfish Institute, Baywater, Inc., and the University of Washington School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences) that all feed into the UW's efforts to answer questions about the effects of geoduck aquaculture on the natural environment and balance of the aquatic ecosystem. The UW has completed the first report, and has almost completed the second one. The third report is due in mid-July.

The final report will be ready by the end of September and will contain a design for an in-the-ground project, as well as proposed Best Management Practices for geoduck aquaculture on state-owned aquatic lands. At that point, an analysis will be done and a recommendation will be prepared for the 2005 Legislative Session on whether or not DNR should allow state-owned aquatic lands to be used for private geoduck aquaculture or whether additional field data is needed to make a decision.

Jump-Start Project

We have been looking for ways to do a small in-the-ground study of geoduck gametogenesis (which means finding out when geoduck become sexually mature and spawn). That issue is an important one that will answer questions about the effect of planted geoduck on the natural population.

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We're on the Web!

[www.dnr.wa.gov/htdocs/aqr/
shellfish/aqua/index.htm](http://www.dnr.wa.gov/htdocs/aqr/shellfish/aqua/index.htm)

To do this **"Jump-Start Project,"** we have come up with a partnership between the University of Washington, DNR, and a private grower. The University will be contributing \$20,000 for a graduate student to do a field study this spring and summer. DNR will contribute \$5,000 to purchase the geoduck from a private grower. The graduate student will sample farmed geoducks every two weeks over the summer. The Hartstine Island beach where the geoduck are growing has five different year-classes. These particular geoduck provide a rare opportunity to control for beach variables such as tidal height, density of planting, and time of planting, but still get 5 different ages of planted geoduck. Tissue samples of the geoduck will be analyzed in the laboratory to determine if they have spawned. The results from this study will be available later this fall.

Economics Study

Besides the scientific questions surrounding geoduck aquaculture, the Steering Committee for this Pilot Project realized that there are also economic questions that need to be answered. So DNR has hired Northern Economics, Inc. to conduct an extensive analysis of market demand and market elasticity for geoduck, and the market effects of geoduck aquaculture on the wild fishery. Northern Economics, Inc. will be providing us with 3-4 case studies based on other species that will provide insight into economic effects of an aquaculture product on the wild species. They will also be conducting interviews in Hong Kong which is where a lot of geoduck end up.

Outreach Continues

We have continued to meet with community groups, elected officials, and stakeholders to spread the word about this Pilot Project and to hear what interested people think about it. Staff has met with the County Commissioners in Clallam, Jefferson, Kitsap, and Thurston counties, the Snohomish County Marine Resources Committee, and the Pacific Coast Shellfish Growers Association. Outreach will continue with the other County Commissions in the rest of the Puget Sound counties in the months ahead. The Pacific Coast Shellfish Growers Association has been accompanying DNR to presentations in order to answer questions about their industry. Staff has also met with the Senate Natural Resources, Energy and Water Committee to provide an update of this project.

All the groups we've met with have been very interested in the topic and have asked to be kept informed as the research reports are received and recommendations are prepared. Some of the issues we've heard include maintaining recreational uses of beaches, maintaining the integrity of the genetic stock of wild geoduck, and whether there is a viable alternative to the use of PVC tubes.

Other Issues

The Steering Committee will be meeting in the coming months to discuss two very important issues: enforcement and Tribal sharing.

Enforcement

Enforcement discussions will be focused on how well the current system of enforcement (using personnel from DNR, WDFW, and the Tribes) is working in the wild fishery and if any changes need to be made if state-owned aquatic lands are used for geoduck aquaculture.

Tribal Sharing

Because the Treaty Tribes have the right to 50% of the existing wild stock geoduck, the Steering Committee will be discussing the effect of geoduck aquaculture on Tribal sharing.

Proprietary Information

We have removed Deliverable 1 from the UW (Literature Review and Synopsis) from our website based on feedback we have received that some of the information contained in the report is considered proprietary by the industry.

While DNR compiles the data and information necessary to make an informed decision on allowing state-owned aquatic lands for geoduck aquaculture, we remain committed to ensuring environmental protection, fostering water-dependent uses, encouraging direct public use & access, utilizing renewable resources, and generating revenue in a manner consistent with those other benefits.

Feedback Wanted

We are always looking for feedback about geoduck aquaculture and this Pilot Project. Please contact either of the two DNR project coordinators: Jeanne Koenings (360) 902-1080 or Celia Barton (360) 902-1025.

You can also find out more about this Pilot Project by going to our website, found at: www.dnr.wa.gov/htdocs/aqr/shellfish/aqua/index.htm